

COBBETT'S WEEKLY POLITICAL REGISTER.

VOL. 85.—No. 6.]

LONDON, SATURDAY, AUGUST 9TH, 1834.

[Price 1s. 2d.]



UNION SOCIETY

On his reported Speech, in the House of Lords, on the 21. July on the Poor-Law Scheme.

Bolt-court, 6. August, 1834.

MY LORD,

THE report of your lordship's speech on the MALTHUSIAN POOR-LAW SCHEME has surprised me more than any thing that I ever read, or ever heard, in the whole course of my life, not excepting your support of the DEAD-BODY BILL. On this reported speech I am now going to remark; but, before I proceed to the performance of this duty, it is right that I observe, that I do not *know* that you made the speech ascribed to you; and that my remarks, as far as they apply to your conduct in this case, are to be considered as *conditional*; that is to say, as having no application to you, if you did not make this speech; that it is on a *publication in a newspaper* that I am making observations, and that I address them to you because they are published under *your name*. I think it right further to observe, that your lordship has rendered great services to the cause of *justice* and of *freedom*. I might state, that, with regard to *myself*, I must be the most ungrateful of all mankind not to be forward on all occasions to acknowledge your goodness to me; goodness, generosity of conduct, in all man-

ner of ways, but, particularly in your defence of me, in your place in parliament when base reptiles there attacked me, at a time when the atrocious tyrants thought that I should never survive my imprisonment and the other horrible cruelties by which they thought I should be silenced for ever. In short, I beg the public to understand me as expressing towards you every sentiment of gratitude that man can entertain towards man. Then as to your private conduct, it is impossible for me to say a word of anything more perfect than that which you have done for the poor people in the several parishes in which you have property and power, would, if it could possibly have been imitated by every other landowner in the kingdom, have rendered even the poor-law of Queen ELIZABETH almost unnecessary; and it is, upon this occasion, my bounden duty to declare, that I have always remarked in you the most kind, compassionate, and indulgent feeling towards the working people. Far above all these, however, do I estimate your excellent conduct in that season of horrible tyranny, when those who prayed for parliamentary reform were plunged into dungeons, or had gags put into their mouths. In short, there is nothing that I can say, that would not fall short of that which I think in praise of your lordship's character, and of your conduct too, with the exception of the Dead-Body Bill, and of this Scotch, Malthusian, revolutionary, poor-law project.

But, my lord, in that same degree, which, from my writings, my readers will naturally entertain respect for your lordship, and be disposed to think that right which you do, in that same degree I must necessarily deem your conduct dangerous, when you do that which I think injurious to the country. Such is the case now before me. Your lordship will acknowledge, that I have, as to many important national concerns, shown as sound a judgment, and have

seen as far before me, as most other men. I believe that you will, without reluctance, acknowledge, that, at several stages of our progress, if the following of my advice, instead of hunting me like a beast of prey, had been the course adopted, there would have been, at this hour, none of these troubles with which we are continually harassed; none of these dangers which menace us from every quarter. If you be willing to acknowledge this, and that, too, without any reluctance, it is not unreasonable in me to presume that my opinion ought to have great weight on a subject, with regard to which, as I have *always* taken a deeper interest in it than in any other, so I must naturally understand it better than I understand any other, having been placed too, all my life long, amidst circumstances giving incessant opportunities for the following of the bent of my mind, to make observations, and collect knowledge, as to this matter; and, my lord, all these things being considered; it being considered further, that it is utterly impossible, in the full sense of that word, that I can have, in this case, any motive other than that of the general good, I do hope that your lordship will not treat with contempt the opinion which I here express, with as much sincerity as if I knew that these were to be my last words; *that, if this Scotch Malthusian revolutionary project be pushed on to EXECUTION, the ultimate consequence will be, a total abrogation of the laws of property; and a total tearing to pieces of all the ancient institutions, and of the whole frame of society in England.*

When, in 1818, I predicted what would be the consequence of a bill like that of Sir ROBERT PEEL'S, if such bill were passed; when I predicted (after the bill was passed) that it never could be carried into full effect; when, in February, 1824, I predicted that Mr. ROBINSON'S banks would blow up; when, in 1826, I predicted the ruin to agriculture, and to industry of all sorts, unless the army and the debt were reduced: when, at the very hour when the Catholic Emancipation Bill was

passing, I predicted that it would add to the troubles, the violences, the miseries of Ireland, unless the Parliament at once resolved to remove the Protestant hierarchy, and consequent Protestant domination from that country; when I put forth these predictions, I was, by nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand men in the country, considered as a dreamer, and, by those who lived on the taxes, considered as a sort of rebel; and I was considered as a sort of wild jester, when I foretold that the Duke of WELLINGTON'S picture would come down from the sign-posts, and that his name would be rubbed off from the corners of the streets. Yet, every one of these predictions has been fulfilled to the very letter. I predicted also upon three or four occasions, that, if the *epitome of Scotch quackery* ever got possession of any considerable degree of power in conducting the affairs of this country, his brain would hatch something or another that would lead to the giving of this sort of government in England its last blow: and, is there any one of my readers who does not now see evident symptoms of the approaching fulfilment of that prediction as well as the rest?

In approaching that which is to be the subject of this letter, I am compelled to observe, that there seems to be something at work, very much like that blindness, with which men and nations are afflicted, when it is the intention of the all-wise Disposer of events to make them instrumental in their own punishment. In this case the punishment will not finally fall upon those who labour; but upon those who do not, whatever the intention may be to the contrary. Were not this species of blindness at work, would this particular TIME have been chosen for the adoption of a project like this? Were there not already difficulties enough for us to contend with? Were not the questions relative to that great branch of this Government and constitution, called the CHURCH; the question relative to that other great mass of public power called the CORPORATIONS; the question relative to the DEBT; the question relative to the MILITARY AND NAVAL ESTABLISHMENTS;

the question relative to the FLOGGING of SOLDIERS, which would be quite enough of itself for any government on earth to deal with; the question relative to the future treatment of IRELAND, and the deciding whether, in future, a people were to starve in a land of plenty or not; the question relative to *parliamentary reform*, not by any means settled yet to the general contentment of the people: the question relative to the conditions on which trade should be carried on with foreign countries; the question of the currency, which must be decided, one way or another, at no very distant day? Were there not difficulties enough already in existence? were we not in a storm of difficulties, the elements contending one against the other? Was not this sufficient, which stirred up the passions of all the higher and middle classes of society? Was not this enough, without a project, which troubles the very cottage, the very shed, of the poorest man in the kingdom? This class, these millions, who were quietly drudging along, while the eternal turmoil was rumbling everywhere above them. They were quiet, at any rate: they casually heard of strange changes which they did not understand very clearly; but, comes this Scotch quackery, stirs up them too, and mixes them up in the general storm, by threatening them with the destruction of their rights, which have been enjoyed by their forefathers from all generations.

Besides this, the evil complained of, the pretended evil, which this measure affects to be calculated to remove, was very fast removing itself; that is to say, the nobility, the gentry, the clergy, the natural magistracy of the country, roused to attention, and justly estimating the unjust sufferings of the people, had, generally speaking, set themselves earnestly to work to produce contentment throughout the country; and the decrease of the poor-rates, as well as the diminution of crime, in the counties which had been most troubled, were an infallible proof of the success of these laudable endeavours. And, this is the moment chosen for introducing a revo-

lution, a total revolution, in the management of these momentous concerns! Trouble, alarm, apprehension, are to come into every village; every group of men in the harvest field are to be compelled to discuss the *great question of property*; they are to be compelled to be civilians, and to decide the point, too, *who has most right to the land*, those, without whose labour it is worth nothing; those who were born upon it, and to whom God and the law have given a right to a living out of it; or those who do nothing to it, or about it, but receive the rents of it. Never, in the whole course of my life did I, what is called, "*talk politics*" with a labouring man. I have always deemed it unfair to do so; because I knew that I had it in my power to make him adopt my opinions, right or wrong; I being as much the master of his mind, as he would be of my body; I possessing over him as much superiority in the work of persuasion, as he possessed over me in the work of hedging and ditching. I have, therefore, never done it, and have confined myself to the use of the press, which can be used by others in answer to me; but, situated as I am, moving in the sphere in which it is my pleasure to move, it is impossible that I should not know what is passing in the minds of the working people with regard to this measure. They have heard that there are to be great workhouses: they have heard all about the thing as to its main features as affecting them; and they are making up their minds accordingly, as, indeed, they naturally would make up their minds. The people in Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Kent, Sussex, Surrey, Hampshire, Wiltshire, and Berkshire, have a sort of knowledge which is hereditary, and which is perfectly correct, of the food, the lodging, the clothing and the treatment, of the Scotch labourers and the Irish labourers; and be you assured, my lord, that dreadful will be the scenes which will arise from an endeavour to reduce them to the state of the Scotch and the Irish.

I will now insert the report of your lordship's speech as I find it in the newspapers; and I take it from the *Times*

newspaper, because it is likely to be the most full and accurate, stating, as I did before, that I do not know that your lordship uttered these words, or anything to the same amount, and that my observations, as far as they apply to you, in this case, are to be received by members as *conditional*. But, I find this publication in a newspaper; I know it to be gone all over the kingdom; I know that, in proportion to your high and excellent character, it is calculated to do mischief, to urge on the Scotch project, and to produce either the most villanous slavery, or the most terrific convulsion; and, being perfectly satisfied as to these points, it is my bounden duty to answer this publication.

The Earl of RADNOR concurred in the observations which had fallen from the noble Baron (Alvanley) with regard to a general system of centralization; but though the noble Lord had urged the continuance of a system of self-government, he must remind him that in many parishes this power became misgovernment; and hence it was that he supported the proposition for the establishment of a central board for at least a short period. He was surprised that the noble Baron (Alvanley) had not discovered that one part of his speech had answered another portion of his address. How came it, he (the Earl of Radnor) must inquire, that the measures which had been adopted under the system of self-government in particular places had not been adopted in the neighbouring parishes (hear, hear), and that they had not emulated the example (so much eulogized) set them by the parish of Bingham, and other places which had been enumerated? (Hear, hear). In order to obtain an effectual union, it was absolutely necessary that there should be a head able and qualified to carry the advantages of any system generally into effect, possessing the power to do so, and uniting such industry, perseverance, and courage, as would secure the success of the scheme. He admitted that if it could be shown that every parish in England contained a Mr. Lowe or a Mr. Litchfield, then the establishment of a board of commissioners was unnecessary and uncalled for, but in the absence of such proof

he must contend that the proposed plan was essential for the formation and preparation of rules and regulations that could not by any individual parish be deviated from. This proposition would not have the effect, as had been contended, of superseding the law, but would rather be calculated to give it full and complete effect for all time. Every noble lord who had spoken had implied that though the law was good, yet the administration was bad, the noble and learned Earl opposite had complained that the commissioners would be mere theorists. All rule and government was based upon theory, and these commissioners would be enabled to unite their theory with practice. (Hear, hear). He deprecated the anxiety expressed by some noble lords that this measure should be put off for another year, in order to afford them time to make inquiries in the country, because sufficient opportunities had already been granted, for it had been admitted that the grievances arising out of the present system had continued increasing for the last twenty years, and yet in the face of that increase nothing had been done. (Hear, hear). He denied that the provisions of the present bill would reduce the people of this country to a state of slavery. Much was said, it was true, of the powers given to the commissioners; but it was forgotten that at present the most offensive powers were vested, not in the hands of men of education, experience, and learning, qualified in every respect to make rules and regulations, and to lay down just and equitable principles for the government of all parishes, but in the hands of overseers and guardians, whose mode of life (he spoke it not disrespectfully), whose occupations made them incapable of framing such regulations—in the hands of men open to all sorts and descriptions of bias and partiality. (Hear, hear). All these evils the central board would be calculated to remove. The objection as to the powers of these commissioners to compel the raising money, which had been raised by the noble and learned Baron opposite (Lord Wynford), in his opinion failed, for the bill itself limited those powers to the raising only of 50*l.*, and that still further limited to the purposes of repairing the workhouses. (Hear). On the whole, he conceived that it was essential the bill should be passed without unneces-

sary delay, not, however, without due deliberation, for he had witnessed the growing evils arising from the administration of the poor-laws. He was mainly anxious for the passing of this bill, because he was convinced that those from whom the rates were raised required this measure of relief, which he trusted their lordships would not refuse to afford them. (Hear, hear).

Here is not much in this speech itself, as to the particular points that it touches on. It is your prominent and decided support of the whole bill; and that, too, after the speech of the Lord Chancellor; and of course upon the grounds and principles laid down in that speech. Nevertheless there are some particular points in your speech which it is necessary for me to notice. First, you allow that if all parishes were under a management like that of BINGHAM, then no change would be necessary. Let us then see what was the management in this parish of BINGHAM. It was this, as described by COWELL, one of the runners of the poor-law commissioners. A parson of the name of LOWE became incumbent of the parish in 1814. He was a magistrate, and resided on his living, and consequently a great payer of poor-rates. And the poor-law runner says that, "knowing that it was impossible to refuse relief according to the practice and custom of the country, he devised means for rendering relief itself so irksome and disagreeable that none would consent to receive it who could possibly do without it, while at the same time it should come in the shape of comfort and consolation to those whom every benevolent man would wish to succour—the old, infirm, idiots, and cripples. For this purpose he placed in the workhouse a steady, cool-tempered man, who was procured from a distance, and was not known in the parish, as master, refused all relief in kind or money, and sent every applicant and his family at once into the workhouse. The fare is meat three times a week, soup twice, pudding once, milk porridge five times." Then he goes on to say: "The man goes to

"one side of the house, the wife to the other, and the children into the school-room. SEPARATION IS STEADILY ENFORCED. Their own clothes are taken off, and the uniform of the workhouse put on. No beer, tobacco, or snuff is allowed. Regular hours kept, or meals forfeited. Every one must appear in a state of personal cleanliness. NO ACCESS TO BED-ROOMS DURING THE DAY. No communication with friends out of doors. Breaking stones in the yard by the grate, as large a quantity required every day as an able-bodied labourer is enabled to break." He tells us, that "the labourers SOON CONTRIVED TO GET WORK, at twelve shillings a week, winter and summer, and that the whole parish was well off."

Now this, then, is the system which your lordship approves of; the workhouse dress, separation of husband and wife, separation of children and parents, and the separation steadily enforced; so that if a labourer cannot get work; if there be a want of employment in the parish, the workhouse dress and the separation come. If a man have a family of ten children, which is not unfrequently the case, and only three of them able to do anything at all, even the smallest thing in the world, towards a maintenance, the man is to clothe and feed, and find fuel and find rent for himself, his wife, and seven children, on the twelve shillings a week; that is to say, nineteen pence a week for each for food, washing, clothing, house-rent, and fuel, which will reduce the food to twopence a day each; and this is starvation; and to this starvation this family must submit, or be clothed like slaves, and submit to the brutal separation. But twelve shillings a week, do I say? Do your lordship's farmers in Wiltshire give more than eight shillings a week, summer and winter? In Surrey, Sussex, and Kent, the men get twelve shillings a week, and in Wiltshire eight, or at the most nine. However this is only a part of this monstrous story of COWELL the runner. The labourers, it seems, immediately got work at twelve shil-

lings a week. Why, then, there is *no want of employment in the country*; and the agricultural committee has told us a prodigious lie; for they tell us, that agriculture is in such a state of distress that there is "*great want of employment*," in consequence of the inability of the farmers to have their lands cultivated in a proper manner; so that this parish of BINGHAM, which is said to be in Nottinghamshire, cannot possibly be in England. It is a falsehood to say that the poor-rates arise from the indisposition of men to have work. Their great amount arises from the want of ability in the occupiers of the land to give employment, and that want of ability arises from the weight of taxes, county-rates, church-rates, and other local burdens, exclusive of the poor-rates; and from the low price of produce compared with those charges upon the land; and these burdens, which have arisen from the conduct of the landowners, and not from anything done by the labourers, are now, it is vainly imagined, to be compensated for by privations and sufferings inflicted on the poor.

According to this account work is plenty all over England, and farmers all stand ready to give twelve shillings a week to men who will work! Is there a man in the whole kingdom, besides this COWELL, who will put his name to a lie like this? Your lordship proceeds, therefore, upon the grounds which are notoriously false; and there remains to be ascribed to you in this case nothing but the disposition to render the getting of relief as irksome as possible; the disposition to send married men to workhouses, strip them of their clothes, put on them the workhouse dress, separate them from their wives, separate the children from the parents, cut them off from all communication with friends out of doors, or leave the skeleton of a husband with his wife and children to starve, let the children be as numerous as they may, and let their ages be what they may. This, then, is your disposition; for you say not a word about finding the man work at twelve shillings a week. Let the law include a provi-

sion for employing every man at twelve shillings a week, and then there is something like justice, there is something like humanity; but while the law makes no such provision, and while our own committees tell us that the employers are unable to give employment, to make it irksome to obtain relief, and to inflict the other degrading punishments, is barbarity indescribable.

So much for the exemplary parish of BINGHAM, which your lordship holds up to the admiration of the country. Your lordship next says, "that this bill will not *supersede* the law, but is calculated to give full and *complete effect* to it." What, then! surely your lordship cannot mean that this bill does not supersede the act of Elizabeth; that it does not set aside the power of the overseer to give relief; that it does not put an end, in fact, to the local government of parishes; that it does not supersede the power that the law gives to the rate-payers to manage their own affairs; that it does not supersede the bastardy laws; that it does not give to commissioners, appointed by the Government and removeable at its pleasure, the power of building great workhouses, only two, three, or four, in a county; your lordship cannot mean that this bill leaves one fragment of the law of ELIZABETH in full effect; you cannot mean, that it is not one great step towards that *centralizing*, which is the character of despotic government; you cannot mean any of these; but you can mean what immediately follows; and that is, that the present "*administration of the poor-laws is bad*." I allow that, too, as far as those laws have been changed by *Sturges Bourne's Bills*, which have put the power into the hands of the rich, when it ought to have been confined, according to the Act of Elizabeth, to the hands of the middle class. But, here we must look at the great pretended ground for the passing of this bill, namely, that the *maladministration* of the poor-laws has caused the amount of the rates to increase, and has produced a state of things, which, to use the expression of the Lord Chancellor, threatens to "*engulf the landed*

estates." There must be some great evil attending the *maladministration of these laws*, otherwise there is no ground for this bill; and this "*great evil*" is, that the poor-rates are so heavy, that they threaten to destroy the proprietors of the land; that it is, they which make the farmer so poor that he cannot pay his rent. Now, in the first place, the last year's returns show that the poor-rates have decreased $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. in amount, on an average throughout the kingdom, which is an answer to that part of Lord MELBOURNE'S speech, where he says, that the poor-rates are a "*growing tax, increasing every year.*" In another part of his speech he says that "*the poor-rates are the heaviest of all the direct taxes, exceeding the assessed taxes and the land-tax put together.*" He did not mean to say what was not true; but he should have recollected that less than one half of the sums collected by the overseers, go to the *relief of the poor*; and that the other half they do not occasion any more than I occasion the execution of the game laws. However, be the amount of the poor-rates what it may, it is very shallow work to proceed upon the supposition that the poor-rates have anything to do in beggaring the farmer, who takes them into account in arranging his rent with his landlord; and, besides, who does not know that the goods sold out of a shop cause the consumer to pay the tax upon the shop, and the poor-rates upon the shop; who is there, possessing common sense, that does not know that the consumer of the corn must pay the poor-rates; and that the administration of the poor-laws can have nothing at all to do in the producing of distress to the farmer; or, in plain words, in making him poorer and worse off. It has long been attempted to be made out, that the poor-rates were swallowing up the capital of the farmer; that it is the *maladministration of the poor-laws*; that is to say, giving too much relief, that is the cause of the frightful and daily increasing distress of the farmer, and of the insufficient cultivation of the land; and this is the great ground for the passing of this bill; but besides the

reason of the case; besides that reason tells us that this is impossible; besides the grossness of the absurdity, which supposes that the farmer can be beggared by relief or assistance given to those who work for him, and who, by the means of these rates are made to work for as little as any humane man would wish them to have to eat, drink, and wear; besides all this, we have the positive evidence, given by the noblemen, the clergymen, the magistrates, the overseers, all over England and Wales, to assure us that the administration of the poor-laws has had *nothing at all to do with impoverishing the farmer.*

The poor-law commissioners, whom your lordship is pleased to consider as high authority in this case, sent round circular questions. Amongst these questions, which were put to 17,17 persons, were these. "Is the amount of agricultural capital in your neighbourhood increasing, or diminishing?" And do you attribute such increase or diminution to any cause connected with the administration of the poor-laws?" To this question every answerer but one said, that agricultural capital *was diminishing*; but, in answer to the second question, *four hundred and one* say, positively, that nothing connected with the administration of the poor-laws has been the cause of the diminution of the farmers' capital. *Eleven hundred and fifty-seven* assign other causes of the diminution, or assign no cause at all. And only a *hundred and fifty-nine* ascribe the diminution to any thing connected with the administration of the poor-laws; and of that hundred and fifty-nine, several are ashamed to put their names, and are given as anonymous. This is evidence collected from noblemen, gentlemen, magistrates, and farmers, of all the counties of England and Wales; and yet, in the face of this evidence, the witnesses being selected by the poor-law commissioners themselves, your lordship urges the passing of this monstrous bill, upon the ground, that it *will relieve the payers of the rates*, who require it, to protect them against the *maladministration of the*

poor-laws! You prefer the evidence of a *hundred and fifty-nine* men, some of whom are ashamed to put their names to what they say, to the evidence of fifteen hundred other men, who are decidedly of a different opinion, and four hundred and one of whom positively assert, that the increasing poverty of the farmer is not owing to the administration of the poor-laws. Your lordship will not question the veracity or the judgment of these fifteen hundred men, of whom you yourself were one, giving your answer in these words: "I believe diminishing; but NOT OWING TO THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE POOR-LAWS"; and yet, my lord, you now support this bill, upon the ground that it is required to relieve the rate-payers, by putting an end to what you now say, is the *bad administration of the poor-laws*!

The next thing I have to notice is, your lordship's assertion, "that sufficient opportunities have already been given for considering this subject." I venture to say, that not one member of either House of Parliament has read one tenth part of the printed matter laid before them upon this subject. If you were now to read it, you would find, that it is the *opinions* of the commissioners, and not the *evidence* which they have collected, upon which you are proceeding. Their opinions are in conformity with those of the Ministry; the whole body of the *evidence* in hostility to those *opinions*. There has, therefore, not been a sufficiency of time and of opportunity to consider and discuss this measure; and the measure ought to have been put off until the next session; and why it was not, no good reason can be assigned, seeing that the bill is not intended to go into effect until next June.

Your lordship says, "that the power of giving relief is not now lodged in the hands of men of *education, experience, and learning*, qualified in every respect to make rules and regulations, and to lay down just and equitable principles for the government of all parishes, but in the hands of *overseers and guardians*, whose mode of

life (he spoke it not disrespectfully), whose occupations made them incapable of framing such regulations; in the hands of men open to all sorts of descriptions of *bias and partiality*." Now, I should be glad to know what *book learning* is required for a man to know the wants of the poor, he living in the same parish with them, and being one of their employers? and whose *experience* is so likely to be perfect as he who is constantly residing, and having daily means of observation upon the conduct of all who come before him for relief? According to the law as it now stands, those who pay the rates are to have the management of them: according to this bill, the owners, and not the occupiers are to have the votes; and, as they are to vote by *proxy*, your lordship being at PARIS, or at ROME, may regulate the relief to the poor at COLESHILL, instead of its being regulated by farmers living on the spot. As to your own particular case, I should be very willing to leave it even to your proxy; because I know that *you* would take care that no poor person should suffer; but all men are not like you; and, besides, even you yourself must delegate your power; and, then it becomes the power of the agent. But, after all, this bill takes away your own power; and, in virtue of it, you give power to a set of commissioners, who may, if they please, establish rules and regulations, such as you would shudder at the very thought of.

You say that overseers and guardians are liable to *bias and partiality*. It is right, and the Act of Elizabeth intended that those whose business it is to relieve the poor should not be in a situation of life which places them beyond the reach of all chance of want of relief for themselves. Men never act so justly as when they are compelled in some sort to make the case their own; and this was the motive, to be sure, which prevailed at the passing of the act of Elizabeth. There will probably be some degree of partiality in the distribution of relief by overseers; but this never can be carried to an extent to cause it to amount to a national evil. The motive is seen

through in a moment, all the parties being so well known to one another; and all the parties being so deeply interested in the matter. A striking proof of this objection to the power of overseers being futile is this, that STURGES BOURNE'S Bills were intended to place the power in the hands of the rich, and to shut out the power of the magistrate, as well as that of the overseer. These bills authorized the appointment of select vestries, and of hiring overseers; but it was left optional with the parishes whether they would adopt this mode of government or not; only a sixth part of the parishes have ever adopted this mode; and many of those parishes which had tried it, returned to the old mode. So that here is experience worth ten thousand theories, in favour of the ancient manner of managing this important matter; but, after all, it is not your lordship's particular arguments in support of this bill.

But your general support of it as a whole; and it is not only fair to presume, but it is necessary to presume, that you support it upon the principles, and with the ultimate view, as these were frankly and boldly expressed by the Lord Chancellor, who moved the second reading of the bill; and though I do from the bottom of my soul abhor those principles and those views, and though I anticipate from the execution of the project, if the execution should be attempted, mischiefs of the greatest magnitude and of the most terrific character, justice to him demands that I say that he has done that which has been done by nobody else; that is, he has frankly avowed the principles upon which he proceeds, and the ultimate object which he has in view. He has been censured by those who call themselves his friends, and particularly by the *Morning Chronicle* (of which it is said that one of the poor-law commissioners is a part-proprietor), for going *too far*; for saying that which it was "*not necessary to say*." He did not go too far; and it was necessary for him to say that which he said; or, at least, it was necessary for him to say it, or to disguise his real

object; and, at the same time, to leave his poor-law commissioners to be mawled to death, little bit by little bit; for their opinions are in conformity with his, and directly at war with the professions of the supporters of the bill. The Lord Chancellor has boldly avowed the real objects and future intentions of the bill; and though your lordship did not do the same in your speech, you must necessarily see that ultimate object and those ultimate intentions; therefore, I am to presume that, in urging on with so much zeal, the passing of this bill, you *approve* of that object and those intentions.

Let us see, then, what are these doctrines of the Lord Chancellor.

1. That *all legal provision* for the poor, in whatever shape, or under whatever name, is *injurious to the poor themselves*.
2. That the poor *have no right to relief*, other than what is given by *act of Parliament*; and that, of course, that which the Parliament can give, *the Parliament can take away*.
3. That landlords will all become paupers themselves, unless something be done to put a stop to the increase of these all-devouring poor-rates.

Upon this last proposition I shall observe first. Indeed I have observed upon it sufficiently already, having shown that the poor-rates are upon the decrease, and that that which is collected by the overseers of the poor is not above one half, if so much as one half, expended upon the poor, or in consequence of the poor; and that, while the Lord Chancellor anticipates *becoming a pauper himself*, in consequence of the poor-rates, he is in much more danger of becoming a pauper from the other charges, which are lumped up under the name of poor-rates, not to mention the fundholders, the dead-weight people, and the other swarms of idle devourers, who, if not stopped, will leave him his bare salary or pension, and that only for a certain length of time. What a sight is here to behold; two Houses of Parliament apparently frightened half to death at the engulfing effect of what is given to relieve the labouring

poor, the amount of which is about four millions, five hundred thousand pounds a year, while they are wringing from the pockets of the people, fifty-two millions a year, *full one half of the whole of which is taken from the working people themselves.* Yes, the whole of the poor-rates, bestowed upon the poor in the way of relief, do not amount to so much money as the yearly duty on the malt and hops, nine-tenths of which duty are paid by the working people themselves! No anxiety at all is expressed in either House of Parliament, lest the fifty-two millions a year should "swallow up the estates." No fear does the Lord Chancellor express lest he should be made a pauper by the fifty-two millions a year. It is the four millions and a half that alarm him, and drive him on his Malthusian theory for security. There are we, voting, to go to Hanover every year, to half-pay officers, their widows, and their children, a sum greater than the annual poor-rates of the county of BEDFORD; there are we voting eight shillings a week to support a soldier's child in the Asylum at CHELSEA; there are we voting six millions a year to persons who are living in idleness, and who have no equitable claim whatever to one single farthing of the money; there are we voting nearly twenty-nine millions a year to fundholders, when they ought not to receive above twelve at the utmost; there are we voting eight hundred thousand pounds a year to better the lot of the negroes in the West Indies; and there are we passing a bill which abrogates the most precious part of the constitution of England, in order to lop off the four millions and a half a year, which are given to our own labourers, when extreme poverty and necessity happen to overtake them.

The proposition of the Lord Chancellor; namely, that all legal provision for the poor, under whatever name, and in whatever shape, is injurious to the poor themselves, I will now examine; and I shall not treat it as a monstrous and savage idea, because I myself once, and for a considerable time, had the

same notion in my head; and I reasoned in support of it just in the same way that the Lord Chancellor now does. I thought that it closed the hand of private charity; I thought that it made parents and children and brethren less anxious for the well-being of each other, and less careful to succour each other; I thought that they referred those to the legal provision, without feeling shame, who, without such provision, they would have been ashamed not to provide for themselves: and it is very certain that the legal provision has this effect to a very considerable extent. But on the other hand the experience of the whole world, and of all ages, tells us that the charity created by a sense of Christian duty, and by the feelings connected with kindred, are not sufficient to prevent beggary generally, and sometimes starvation. The law, if it be just, will not leave the existence, and the happy existence, of the honest working man to chance. There are the passions of men, as well as their natural disposition, to be considered. The vagrant act forbids, and very wisely forbids, people to beg out of their own parish. In their own parish they have enmities and spites and vindictive feelings to contend against Christian compassion. Amongst relations there are quarrels and revenges and wrongs and retaliations; so that without supposing any in-born want of compassion, or any in-born want of natural affection, there is too great a risk of people perishing with hunger and with cold, unless the law come and say, that this shall not be; unless the law come and say, you who possess the land, possess it upon the condition of sharing with those who have no land, to the extent of their absolute wants in case of extreme necessity; unless the law come, as the law of England does, and say that no man shall perish from want, while the land whereon he was born produces a sufficiency for his relief.

It is urged, however, that a legal provision for the poor tends to *degrade* them; to make them careless in providing for old age or infirmities. I never hear this word *degradation* made

use of, as applied to the labourers of England, without comparing their character with that of the Scotch or the Irish. I once heard your lordship say, and I was very much pleased to hear you say it, that the labourers in England were the most civil, kind, and best behaved people in the world. I am sure you thought so; and I am sure you think so still; and it is the laws of the country, to be sure, the ancient and hereditary laws, which made the people what they are. And as to the degradation of applying for relief, how many thousands of most respectable tradesmen and farmers are compelled, in consequence of misfortunes, or have been compelled, to apply for relief from that fund towards which they themselves have been contributing all their lives! In the parish of CHADLINGTON, in Oxfordshire, it is related, in one of these immense poor-law books, that the hired overseer, "looking at the rate-book of thirty years back, finds that "all the farmers of that date, except "two, are become poor men"! Now, is it an act of *degradation* in these men to apply for relief, or would it be better for them to be begging about the country from door to door; would their attitude be more manly and independent in going about, as they do in Scotland, with a beggar's badge upon their shoulder, and a beggar's license in their pocket? In the reign of the savage cub of a savage sire, EDWARD the Sixth, beggary broke out in England which never had been seen in England before. Enraged that the people would not lie down and starve in compliment to the Protestant religion, the ferocious government passed a law to burn beggars in the cheek; and for a second offence, to put iron collars round their necks, with chains descending to their ancles, and to make them work in this state as slaves to the rich. Even this savage law did not do: ELIZABETH tried martial law and the gibbet and the rack; but the people never gave up the struggle, till they obtained by the act of ELIZABETH a compensation for what had been taken from them by the plunderers, under HENRY the Eighth and

EDWARD the Sixth. The rights which they acquired then, or rather which they reconquered, they have enjoyed ever since, and will enjoy (with the exception of the abridgment of those rights by STURGES BOURNE's bills), until there shall be a want of wisdom sufficient to endeavour to carry this new bill into effect.

The Lord Chancellor tells us, that *frugality* is prevented by this legal provision for the poor; that this provision makes people be at their ease about future consequences, and prevents them from saving against old age and infirmities. In the first place, I do not believe the fact. But, in the next place, if the legal provision had these effects, I discover more good than harm in these effects. What can be more desirable than that a man, whose life is; and must be, a life of hard labour; what can be more desirable than that such a man should be free from care with regard to old age and infirmities? Would you have him have the racking cares of the miser, and the toil of the labourer, too? It is quite enough to have the toils; and, in consequence of this assurance of support in old age, and in case of infirmities, he ventures upon greater toil, and upon greater risks, and he does more in the course of his life than he would do, if he had no such assurance. The curious thing is, that there is no grudging to make provision for worn-out and disabled soldiers and sailors, who are always well provided for, and ungrudgingly. They receive more pay than a labouring man, and yet it never came into the heads of any one to bid them save their money, or to reproach them with not having done it. We vote them millions a year without any grumbling; and vote it, too, out of the pockets of the men who labour at the loom or in the field.

Besides, has it never occurred to the Lord Chancellor, during his many years of philosophizing, that, if it were possible for all working men to save money, there would very soon be no work done. There always will be some few who will save a part of their earn-

ings; but this never can be general. The order of the world requires, and the good of the world requires, that working men, generally speaking, should live up in one way or another, to the full extent of their earnings; and that they should be at their ease with regard to old age and infirmities: this has always been the case in England, since the country has borne that name; and, until the Lord Chancellor, or your lordship, can find a better working people upon the face of the earth, let me hope you will cease your efforts to revolutionize this state of things.

The other proposition of the Lord Chancellor; namely, that the poor have no other right to relief than that which is granted by act of Parliament; and that that which is given by Parliament, Parliament can take away; this proposition would, in order to give it its full and complete confutation, require more time and a much larger space than I have at my command. Nevertheless, I shall say enough I hope to satisfy every reasonable man upon the subject. It never will be contended, by any man in his senses, that it is not against reason and against nature herself to suppose that men could have entered into civil society, for the purpose of exposing the millions to suffer of hunger, thirst, and cold, at the pleasure of the few. This never can be believed by any man in his senses; and all our lawyers agree, that even an act of Parliament made against natural justice is void in itself; for, as BLACKSTONE tells us, no legislature has the power to destroy or abridge those natural rights which have been given by God himself. "Whatever," says he, "is done by a man to save either life or member, is looked upon as done upon the highest necessity and compulsion; and the same is also a sufficient excuse for the commission of many misdemeanours." Chief Justice HALE, and after him BLACKSTONE, say, "that the act of ELIZABETH has established charity as a system; and has interwoven this relief for the poor with the very constitution of our Government."

The Lord Chancellor knows all this

a great deal better than I do; but he prefers the law of MALTHUS to that of BLACKSTONE and HALE, and his philosophy he prefers to that of BACON and of LOCKE; and this great and wise institution, which has formed a people of so excellent a character, which has given patience to industry and cheerfulness at the same time; which has given peace to the country, and which has really been the greatest glory of the country for so many ages, he would now demolish, in order to "animate that *private charity*," which he finds so *dormant in this kingdom*; when it is notorious to every man who knows any thing of the world, that the hand of charity is nowhere so liberal, so ready, so generous, as it is in this England itself.

The true history of the poor-laws of England is this. Before the Protestant Reformation, the necessitous poor were relieved by the monasteries, and by the parochial clergy. The Lord Chancellor knows this very well; but he denies that they had any *right* so to be relieved. Will he deny that certain persons of any parish, or any place, have a *right* to the benefit of a school, or an hospital, put into the trust of a municipal corporation? No, he will not deny this. Will he deny, that, when the convents were founded, there was always a condition that they should relieve the poor and necessitous, the widow, and the stranger; and that, in many cases, they were compelled by their endowment to relieve the poor of certain parishes or districts? If he deny this, I cannot refer to the original of any particular endowment; but I can refer him to Bishop TANNER, who, very amply, states the facts. He will not deny, then, that the poor had a *right* to relief from those monasteries, according to the terms of the endowments. Neither will he deny that their right to relief from those monasteries would still remain perfect, were there not a legal provision for the poor, in another manner; nor will he pledge his reputation as a lawyer, that it is not now, *in law*, as perfect as ever; and only lies *dormant* in consequence of the existence of the act of ELIZABETH.

It was the duty and the practice of the owners of the land to relieve the poor, before the monasteries existed. When they endowed the monasteries they charged them with the relief of the poor, nothing being so proper as that that relief should pass through the hands of persons devoted to the service of God. By acts of Parliament the monasteries were taken away from the monks and the nuns; but the relief to the poor, which it was the duty of those monasteries to administer, WAS NOT TAKEN AWAY by those acts of Parliament. On the contrary, IT WAS EXPRESSLY RESERVED by the acts of Parliament which gave the monasteries and their estates to secular persons; and it legally belongs to the poor of this day as completely as it did to their Catholic forefathers. And it is just (and hardly that) to withhold this right from them, only because they had a compensation in the 43. of ELIZABETH.

But the parochial clergy also were bound to relieve the necessitous out of the tithes. The Lord Chancellor denies the correctness of the canons of the church; he denies the fourfold distribution; and, though that distribution is as much a matter of incontestable history as almost any statement of history of more than fifty years old, I will not insist upon that. I will only insist upon what he cannot deny. He cannot deny that which we find in Acts of Parliament; and then, he cannot deny that the 15. of Richard the Second, which was enforced by an Act of the next reign, makes the whole matter of right to relief clear and indubitable. Many of the livings in England and Wales had been appropriated to the monasteries; and they taking away the great tithes, and leaving only the small tithes to a vicar, deprived him of a sufficiency for the relief of the poor. To put a stop to this injustice the Act of Richard was passed, compelling the monasteries to leave a sufficiency in the parishes appropriated to them for the relief of the poor in those parishes. Thus, then, Englishmen in all ages had a right to relief out of the land. In other Catholic

countries that relief was suffered to come according to the pleasure of the clergy; but in England, where the principles of justice prevailed more than in any other country, the common and statute law took care that the church should do its duty to the necessitous poor, and this was one great cause of the distinguished happiness, good living, good dresses, good character, absence of viciousness, of the working people of this country.

After the Reformation this holy law was violated: the new owners of the monasteries and Protestant possessors of the livings, neglected the relief of the poor; and there was a long fight between the working people and the landowners until the 43. of ELIZABETH, when the poor obtained the compensation stipulated in the Act of that year, which compensation will be taken away by the passing of this bill.

You, or the Lord Chancellor, may possibly ask me, what is the *worth* of this *prescriptive* right, even if it be established? What is the *worth* of it, if the Parliament pass an act to take it away, and have the power to enforce that act? You may ask me this; and I am obliged to confess that the right is worth nothing; but then, I must say, that the whole *depends upon the power of enforcement*. The *right* is as clear as your lordship's right to your estate. You could not keep that against an act of Parliament with power to enforce the act. The King could not keep his crown against an act of Parliament to repeal the act of the 12. and 13. of William and Mary. His right to the crown rests upon an act of Parliament, without prescription: the people's right to relief out of the land has both act of Parliament and prescription whereon to rest, and whereon to be defended.

But it may still be said, how do the endowments and the long custom, and the practice, of which I have been speaking, *constitute a right*? Doubt this; express a doubt here, my lord; and then no man has a right to any piece of property in the kingdom. You fling all into the air, and down it comes to be scrambled for; and the ten

thousand, or perhaps twenty thousand estates once held by the monasteries, are hunted up, and the owner called upon to produce his title! The owners of nearly one-half of all the lands in the kingdom, including the great tithes, have no title worth a straw to those estates and those tithes, if you treat as waste paper; if you treat as laws obsolete, the acts of the 27. and 31. of Henry the Eighth. Those acts expressly tell you that the rights of the poor are reserved. But when the mind is once set to work, and driven with great force in any direction, it never stops where it intends to stop when it begins to move. Set men to trace out these titles, and they will *trace out all others*. They will find that there is no estate which belongs in *absolute proprietorship to any man*! And the Lord Chancellor knows well that they will find BLACKSTONE to tell them so, he taking his law from HALE and from COKE, and they taking it from lawyers that had gone before them. The historians of Ireland will tell you that JAMES the First ousted all the proprietors of whole counties, upon a bare ejectment, stating that the lands belonged to him in the quality of *head of the Commonwealth*, and challenging them *to show the contrary*!

In short, here is a question to agitate, to disturb, all men who are proprietors, and to trace all rights of possession to their origin. I verily believe, that the projectors of this scheme are animated solely by their fondness of a theory. Very pretty theory, and very amusing as long as it remained a mere theory; but when it is proposed to put it in practice, those who have the power of such putting in practice ought to be very cautious how they move, especially when the practice must inevitably go to the quick of millions of the community; and when a commotion of any extent near the grand seat of paper-money may, in an hour, blow the whole fabric to atoms.

I cannot conclude without a more particular notice of that part of your lordship's speech which relates to the rate-payers. You are reported to have

said: "He was mainly anxious for the passing of this bill, because he was convinced that those from whom the rates were raised *required this measure of relief*." Now, my lord, these words mean, that the farmers, tradesmen, and people of the active and industrious classes of society, who pay the rates, want this bill to be passed. Reading the newspapers, and seeing the loads of petitions presented against this bill, and seeing who the petitioners are, and in what state of life, I hope I may pronounce it to be impossible that your lordship could have uttered these words. Whether, however, you uttered them or not, nothing of meaning more erroneous ever came from the lips of mortal man. Nine-tenths of the magistrates and the clergy disapprove of this bill, and expect it to produce something nearly approaching to rebellion. The farmers and the tradesmen, whether in London or elsewhere, detest it to a man. They think they see in it a project for drawing the poor-rates into the pockets of the landowners; and what is worse, *to draw the wages of the poor into their pockets also*. Some of the answers which the poor-law commissioners have received contain remarks to this amount: That the poor-rates do not hurt the farmer; that he pays his *rent* in two parts, "one part to the landlord, and one part to the poor." This was a tickler; but nothing upon earth could be more true; so that if you take away the poor landlord, you give to the rich landlord. But evident as this is it appears not more evident to the farmers and tradesmen, that is not all that is intended. They think that it is intended also *to reduce the rate of wages*, and to bring the saving into the pockets of the landlords; and though it is impossible, from every circumstance, that the Lord Chancellor can wish to do this; and though it is possible that your lordship might gain money by it, I sincerely believe that you would give up your estate rather than gain by such means; but it is my bounden duty to tell you, that this is the general opinion amongst all persons in the middle class of life, who think, and who say, that this bill is a

first step towards reducing the working people in England to the state of the working people in Ireland. And, my lord, have they nothing to induce them to hold this opinion? They hear the Lord Chancellor undisguisedly assert, that all tax upon the land, in any degree whatsoever, for the relief of the poor, is a thing that ought not to be; they hear the cry against the poor as swallows up of the land, while they hear the landowners make no complaint about the millions expended on soldiers, on pensioners, on sinecurists, on retired people, on half-pay people, and the like; they see this bill putting almost the whole power of vestries into the hands of landowners voting by proxy; they see TUFNELL, as *student-at-law*, promoted to be an Irish church commissioner, after having recommended in his report the total abolition of poor-laws in Scotland at once, and the *gradual abolition of them in England*; they know, that, if the whole of the sum given as relief to the poor could be put into the pockets of the landlords, it would be but a mere pittance, to gain which it would not be worth while to set the middle and working classes at defiance; but they know that the WAGES amount to fifty or sixty millions a year, and that if the wages of labour could be reduced to the Irish scale, two-thirds of all these millions would go into the pockets of the landlords; and while all these things are well known to every intelligent man in the middle rank of life, they have all heard, and I vouch for the fact, that one of the poor-law runners complained that the labourers in Sussex were accustomed to *too high living*; and they have heard, and I vouch for the truth of this fact also, that the instructions to the barrister who drew the bill state, that **IT IS DESIRABLE TO ACCUSTOM THE WORKING PEOPLE TO A COARSER KIND OF FOOD!**

These are the facts, assembled together in the minds of the farmers, the traders, and all persons in the middle rank of life: upon these facts they found their reasoning; the conclusion is inevitable; and it is one and the same in every part of England and Wales.

They reason all alike; and, indeed, it is impossible not to perceive that, whatever may be intended, the effect of this bill must be, to reduce wages to the Irish standard; to reduce the working people to the state of the Irish working people, and to put three-fourths of the present wages into the pockets of the landlords. The first effect in the country will be, to raise the rents of farms, upon the ground that the poor-rates were diminished, or abolished; and the augmentation would be so great, that the farmer would be compelled to lower the wages. Men would, at first, refuse to work for reduced wages; there would be the great workhouse for them, and the **COARSER SORT OF FOOD**. They must then submit, and come down to the potatoes and sea-weed, and the rags and nakedness. The farmer would not gain a straw, but would be poorer than he is now; for the landlord would demand high rent in proportion to the low wages.

It is one of the great misfortunes of men, situated as the Lord Chancellor is, surrounded with a race that write and flatter; all his walls covered with books, and other such-like sources of knowledge, to believe that tradesmen and farmers, and especially chopstick labourers, are wholly incapable of reasoning, and are destitute of all powers of penetrating into the designs of great men. This is a capital mistake; and in this present case, I would pledge my life, that the moment the contents of this bill become completely known to the people at large, as it will be, and must be, in the course of a very short time, they will all come instantly to one and the same conclusion, that it is a scheme for making the working people live upon potatoes, to let them have nothing but water to drink, to reduce their wages to next to nothing, and to make the farmer give to the landlords three-fourths of the money which they now get in wages.

What may be the consequences of their coming to this conclusion it is impossible that I can know, and not by any means necessary for me to guess at; but let what may come, I shall have

done every thing in my power to prevent the passing of the bill, and shall pray to God, that the Parliament and the Government will, when both have had time for reflection, not attempt to carry it into execution.

I am,

With the greatest respect,
Your lordship's most humble
And most obedient servant,
WM. COBBETT.

P.S. My lord, do you not remember how people used to laugh at the SPENCEANS? POOR SPENCE, who was a sort of crack-skull, was sent to jail by Lord KENYON for a couple of years; and that made him the founder of a sect. This sect contended, that all the land was the people's farm, and that it ought to be taken possession of by the people, and hired out for the public good; and, as the poor-law-projectors tell us that the poor people would be *benefited* by making it *irksome* for them to obtain relief, by putting a workhouse dress upon them, and by the separation from wife, children, and friends; or, being left to starve; so the Spenceans, taking the Duke of BEDFORD for an instance, asserted, and, as they said, proved, that *he would be benefited* by their taking away his estate. I am sure that your lordship remembers what laughter this occasioned; and yet was it more ridiculous, now, than the pretence, that the main object of this bill is to raise the character of the labouring man, to make him better off, to make him intellectual and happy! Ah! my lord! This is truly called *over acting* the thing; and it has done a great deal to awaken the suspicions of the people.

Your lordship, upon being asked by the commissioners as to the causes of the agricultural riots, answered them in the following words: "The low rate of wages; the harsh treatment of the labourers; the desire to depress them; the general feeling of distrust and animosity existing between the agricultural labourers and their employers." I insert and publish this answer, for two reasons; first, to do justice to your lordship; and, next, for the

purpose of asking you what you expect to be the consequences of the present measure. If such were the consequences of the harsh treatment, the desire to depress, the feeling of distrust and animosity, existing before the riots, what will be the consequences now, when ALREADY, there is the greatest possible distrust created by the very sound of the measure? The wages have been raised; and all the talkers and all the writers in the world would not persuade the labourers, that this revolutionary scheme is not intended to compel them to submit to lower wages. I do not, as I said before, believe it possible, that the Lord Chancellor can have this intention; because there is no motive for his having it; but there are others who have the intention, though they have not the hardihood to avow it; and, the suspicions have been greatly augmented, too, by the Tories suffering this bill to pass, in almost total silence on their part. At any rate, whatever may be the intentions or the wishes of any body with regard to this bill, its effect, if carried into execution, must be to reduce the labourers to potatoes and water, and to put three fourths of their wages into the pockets of the landlords.

An edition of the above letter, PRICE 2d., will be published immediately. I trust that those who think with me on the subject will do their utmost to circulate it.

TO

LORD ALTHORP,

On the Paper-money works in the United States of America.

Bolt-court, 6 Aug., 1834.

MY LORD,—Do you, amongst all the nonsense that you have heard from the Negro-canters, and amongst all the incessant botheration about *centralization* that we have heard since last year this time, remember, that, about a year ago, I did myself the honour to send you a

book that I had just then re-published, called the *Curse of Paper-money*, being an account of the workings of that thing in the United States? Do you remember a letter addressed to you soon afterwards, calling on you (on the suggestion of Mr. Woodward of New York) to be prepared for the consequences of the measures, on the adoption of which the President seemed resolved? If you do remember these things the following news from the NEW YORK papers of the 9. of July, ought to be and must be, worthy of your particular attention.

"INCREASE OF SPECIE.—When Mr. Benton made his speech on the introduction of Mr. Taney's Treasury Report of the 11. of June, that report which drove the ghost of alarm from the Chamber of the Senate, he (Mr. Benton) showed from the Custom-house returns the great and regular increase of specie which was taking place in the United States; and which then amounted for the year 1833, and the first half of 1834, to near 20,000,000 dollars. Authentic accounts since communicated to the Senate, show that the increase is still going on as rapidly as ever. On the 30. of June, being the last day of the session, Mr. Benton presented to the Senate another statement of the imports and exports of specie, which had been received at the Treasury Department since the 11. of June. The aggregate imports for this brief period, nineteen days, were 2,165,700 dollars, and the exports to 275,219 dollars, besides what came by passengers, and which is not entered in the custom-house books. The clear gain must, therefore, have exceeded D. 2,000,000, an unprecedented amount, and looking almost like an interposition of Providence to save the people of the United States from the atrocious and nefarious conduct of the Bank of the United States, which is now hoarding about D. 13,000,000 of specie, and might have accomplished her diabolical policy of distressing the country, and breaking the State Banks, had it not been for this great and providential

supply of more than D. 20,000,000 of hard money received from foreign countries.

"GOLD CURRENCY.—The new law is to take effect on the 31. instant; but *already gold is in circulation!* Already the rare and precious metal is *jingling in the pockets*, and glittering in the hands of the people. Already many travellers have supplied themselves with it, and will be able to traverse the country without the danger of receiving, or the humiliation of offering to pass, the counterfeit imitations of a wretched paper currency. *Strangers as our whole population are to the sight of gold*, it may be necessary to give them some information upon the value of the coins which will come chiefly into circulation. Our old coinage, now in existence, will pass thus: the eagle, D. 10 66 2-3; half-eagle, D. 3 33 1-3; the quarter-eagle, D. 2 31 1-6; this being the true value of the pure gold now in those coins; the new coinage will contain as much less pure gold as will make the eagle and its parts pass at D. 10, D. 5, and D. 2 50. British gold, of which a great deal will come in along the whole line of the northern frontier from Passamaquoddy Bay to Lake Superior, as well as on the sea-coast of the Atlantic, will pass thus: the guinea, D. 5 3/4; the sovereign, D. 4 84; the louis-d'or of France, about D. 3 75; the doubloons, Spanish and Patriot, D. 15 60. Note.—All these values suppose full weight, as the value is always to be corrected by weight. The doubloons, both Spanish and Patriot, are by law the same value, for they are of the same weight and fineness; but the Spanish doubloon will generally be above the legal rate in that market for exportation to Cuba, where that species of doubloon passes for D. 17."

Now, my lord, that is news worth reading. You perceive, that the Americans have *lowered the standard of gold to that of silver*. They did not find the gold come, and this was the way to bring it. This is the way to demolish the infernal machine of paper!

And, does your lordship remember, that I (about the time above-mentioned) took the liberty to tell you, that, if *America returned to specie*, they would give our affair a *shake*? And what do our own newspapers of THIS DAY tell us? They tell us this: *that our gold is going away to America*; that our paper is *contracting in consequence of it*; and *I know, and you know*, that this must *bring down prices*, and bring additional distress to farmers, landlords, and to all persons engaged in *active trade*; while it will augment the receipts of the fundholders, the army, navy, pensioner, placeman, annuitant and mortgagee! Our newspapers of to-day tell us this:

“Exchequer-bills have been termed
“in the city the barometer of the money-market, and as a gradual continued decline in them has occurred
“during several days past, people are beginning to make inquiry into the
“cause of it. The first suspicion in these cases always falls upon the
“Bank, since whenever a contraction of the circulation is judged necessary,
“the readiest mode of effecting it is by sales of Exchequer-bills, which may be
“done avowedly in the open market, or in some circuitous way whenever it is
“thought advisable to conceal the operation. In the present instance, however,
“no circumstance has come to light affording a fair presumption that
“the Bank are selling, but it has not removed the suspicion nevertheless,
“that this is the case. The state of the money-market justifying the opinion
“that the Bank ought in prudence to curtail the circulation at this time, it
“is still believed that they are sending Exchequer-bills to market, and that
“this is the sole cause of the decline in them. A great demand for gold, as
“we have already intimated, does assuredly exist, not only for the United
“States, where an immense amount will be wanted to complete the measure
“for establishing a different standard between gold and silver, but also
“for other parts of the world; and what makes the matter more serious is, that
“the stock of silver bullion and dollars

“in the country is lower than has been known for many years past, which
“will cause gold to be called for in all those cases wherein silver, if it could
“be readily obtained, would be sent in preference to it. Without looking
“therefore to foreign politics, and considering merely the immense liabilities
“of the Bank in notes and deposits, and branch-bank circulation, in connexion
“with the demand for the precious metals, there are abundant causes for
“concluding that some contraction is necessary, and that it is, in fact, now
“in progress. This will be cause for alarm or otherwise, according to the
“extent to which it may be deemed requisite to carry it, but it is very generally apprehended by those who have
“considered the subject, that a *very limited contraction* will by no means
“answer the present purpose.”

“CITY, SATURDAY EVENING.—The Public SECURITIES have evinced a
“considerable degree of heaviness within the last few days, which is ascribed
“to conflicting causes. One cause, which has had its influence on the
“funds, is the *impression* which exists that there will shortly be a *drain of the precious metals for the United States*. Yesterday and to-day about
“50,000 ounces of gold coin have been entered for exportation to New York,
“and the shipments of silver have amounted in the same period to upwards of 30,000 ounces. One large
“capitalist, it is understood, is making preparations to export a *million and a half of specie*, should it be required.
“These circumstances have led to the depression of full five-eighths per
“cent. that has taken place in the public funds, and sales were made this
“morning at the lowest prices of the week.”

Well done, JACKSON! Well done, JONATHAN! Only KEEP ON, and you are saved from an insolent monied aristocracy, and we are delivered, in a very short time, from more and greater plagues than God ever inflicted on the land of Egypt.

Now, I beg your lordship to consider, that America (in which there NEVER

was before a gold circulation!) *must* (if she **KEEP ON**) now have a *large share of the gold of the world*; and that the greater part of that share *must go from England*. To paper, sheer, bare, worthless, inconvertible, false, base paper *we must come*; or we *must reduce the interest of the debt*! Numerous have been the acts of hostility (open and secret) that we have committed against the liberties of America: the "*National Bank*" scheme was the last; a last deadly effort. The people of America have seen through the scheme; they are *defending themselves*, and *taking their revenge*. If you, my lord, have **RESOLUTION** adequate to the emergency, we are *safe*; but if you have not; and if you continue to endeavour to make us pay *fifty-two millions a year* in gold, with *wheat at the present prices* (and it must be *lower*); if you continue to attempt to do this (and I fear you will), then this nation, and especially this aristocracy and this church, and the landowners, will *suffer indeed* for all our unjust hostility to the liberties of the American people! Then, indeed, will the town of **HAMP-TON** and the town of **FRENCHTOWN** be avenged! Then will the plots and conspiracies of Sir J. CRAIG and Captain HENRY; then will the manifesto of JOHN WILSON CROKER; then will the deeds of COCHRANE and COCKBURN; then will the putting to death of the American seamen in the horrid prison on *Dartmoor*; then will all these (faithfully recorded in my *History of the Regency of George the Fourth*) receive their just and appropriate reward!

I am,

Your lordship's most humble

And most obedient servant,

WM. COBBETT.

FIRES IN THE COUNTRY.

FIRE AT COLERNE.

To the Editor of the Bath Guardian.

SIR,—Incendiarism has recently exhibited its devastating effects in this

neighbourhood, and to discover the perpetrator a reward of two hundred pounds is offered, and his Majesty's pardon to those concerned who will give information, except the actual perpetrator. These melancholy and malicious visitations seldom occur without some powerful incentive; and deeply is it to be lamented that the vindictive feelings of our fellow-men should be exhibited by conduct so atrocious and repugnant to every thing like English feeling, and altogether so novel in the hitherto open and straightforward character of the British people.

These incendiary fires are, however, of recent occurrence, and to trace the evil to its source is surely one of the first duties of the Government and the legislature. Many have been the legal examples exhibited to the country, and many the offences punished by the forfeiture of life; but these legalized im-molations and examples appear wholly inadequate to arrest the soul-harrowing crime so derogatory to our national character. As it regards the fire at Colerne, a little inquiry might perhaps trace the lamentable event to a cause, and though no provocation can for one moment palliate the conduct of the incendiary, it would operate as a guide to the future proceedings of the statesman and the legislature.

Many are the causes to which the fire at Colerne are attributed; and worthy and respected as Mr. Pinchin is on all hands admitted to be, it is fair to presume that some strong incentive must have operated upon the mind of the guilty party.

Is not Mr. Pinchin one of the overseers of the parish? Has there not been recently introduced into the parish of Colerne a new system of "farming" the pauper poor, by which their wretched condition is rendered more wretched than heretofore? Was there not some harsh conduct shown towards the widow and children of the poor man who broke his leg at the recent feast at Mr. Boody's, and fell a victim to his misfortune? Is not the rector of the parish absent from his living and attending another which he has in Oxfordshire or elsewhere,

leaving his flock to a curate ; and when the rector was actually performing duty in the parish, were not he and the parishioners in unceasing disputation ? And did his flock under such circumstances derive any useful assistance from his spiritual exhortations, or was his example so salutary as to produce any effect on his parishioners ? Did he by precept and example teach them the evil consequences of spiritual teachers being game preservers, severe tithe collectors, begettors of an illegitimate progeny, and proclaim, with effect, that the kingdom of spiritual guides ought not to be of this world ?

If the queries which are here submitted as to the new mode of managing the pauper poor of this parish be correct, would it not be one of the first duties of the Government to pause ere the new Poor-law Bill become a law of the land ? Would it not be policy to trace the evils to their source, and to legislate accordingly, without fear, favour, or affection for any class, particularly the landed interest, to whose neglect and rapacious conduct the disastrous state of the country is in a very considerable degree to be attributed ? The Government and legislature should bear in mind, that, in a country like England, renowned for its industry, skill, enterprise, great internal resources, and everything which constitutes real national greatness, when we see age going to the workhouse and youth to the gallows, something must be radically wrong in the system of Government ; to the superficial observer everything may appear fair, but there lies hidden from the eye of common observation a mass of wretchedness, which has no other chance but to expire in poverty or infamy, and their very entrance into life is marked with the presage of their fate, and until that is remedied it is in vain to punish. How much worse must be the national degradation, and how far more appalling our condition, when not only youth and age are thus reduced, but the hale, laborious, and once proverbially honest of our labouring adult population, are the inmates of workhouses, or the parish-pay seeking,

spiritless, dependents of poverty and want. I am, &c.

PUBLICOLA.

Box, July 16.

WINCHESTER ASSIZES.

At the opening of the Crown Court on Monday morning every part of it was thronged with persons anxious to hear the result of the trial of George Barrett and John Munday, charged with setting fire to a load of straw, on the 19. of February last, with intent to destroy the adjacent farm buildings, belonging to Upper Cranbourne farm, in the parish of Wonston, occupied by Mr. W. Saunders.

Mr. Missing, with whom was Mr. Dampier, addressed the jury for the prosecution, observing that the present was one of the most serious charges that could be brought before them. Acts of this description were generally committed when people were at rest, and property was consequently peculiarly exposed. The chief evidence would be that of an accomplice, which, if believed, would leave no doubt of the guilt of the prisoners. To such a witness considerable suspicion was attached, as he would be anxious to shift the suspicion from himself ; and his evidence, therefore, could not be received unless corroborated.

Mr. W. Saunders deposed that the prisoners were his servants, lodging in the house belonging to Upper Cranborne Farm, about a mile to the south of Upper Cranborne. Was alarmed about eight o'clock on the evening of the 19. of February, when he mounted his horse, and rode as fast as he could towards the fire, which was increasing rapidly. When he arrived, Munday and Barrett were getting the harness out of the stable, and Parsons was driving the pigs from the yard. Both barns were on fire, the wagon of straw standing between them. Barrett told witness that the fire commenced in the load of straw, and that no one had been seen about the yard. Left the fire about twelve o'clock, accompanied by the two prisoners and Parsons. As they pro-

ceeded, Barrett said, "I think it is a pity that lucifer matches should be sold.

Cross-examined by Mr. Jeremy—When arrived at the fire the men were acting as promptly as possible. Never recollect to have heard prisoners make any complaint. Mr. Beckett, of Winchester, was sent for, who arrived about twelve o'clock, and took the two prisoners and Parsons into custody.

Charles Parsons—Lived at Upper Cranborne Farm with the two prisoners, were the only persons on the farm. Went to Sutton on the 19. of February, and returned about eight o'clock, when Barrett took a candle and lantern, and all three went out to rack the horses up. Was in the stable about a quarter of an hour. On coming from the stable Barrett blew the candle out, and Munday said they were going to set fire to the farm. Witness said he should have nothing to do with it. Barrett took hold of his arm, and drew him towards the straw, Munday saying he would kill him if ever he told. Munday drew a match through the sand paper, and set fire to the straw in the middle of the wagon. We all three returned to the house, and went into our bed-rooms. On looking out and seeing the two barns on fire, went to turn the horses out, followed immediately by Barrett and Munday. Saw Mr. Saunders come up and held his horse, and also the horses of other gentlemen, as many as he could. Barrett jumped over the pales and told me that Mr. Dallas, the parson, wanted to speak to me, and that I should say I knew nothing about it. Went with prisoners and master to his other house.

Cross examined—Have lived with Mr. Saunders since Michaelmas. Was twelve months at Mr. Russ's with Munday, and was turned away for carelessness. Munday had thrashed me once at Mr. Russ's. Had said I should like to see Upper Cranborne Farm on fire. Had been in gaol a month before I said that Munday had set fire to the property. Never said "that I would say any thing to clear myself; that there was not a man in Sutton but I would accuse to clear myself,"

Nathaniel Newman, a labourer, was told by Barrett that the fire broke out in the load of straw between the two barns, just as they were getting into bed, and that his box, and some articles of clothing were in the privy behind the house, where they were seen by witness.

Mr. Jas. Deare arrived at Upper Cranborne shortly after Mr. Saunders. Munday was working with witness in preserving the granary, and Barrett was similarly employed.

Mr. P. Lee, solicitor to the prosecution, in consequence of information he had received, searched the house and premises on the 21. of Feb. Found in the corner of a room on the ground floor, where Parsons slept, a lid of a lucifer match box, with some matches, apparently recently burnt, concealed in some hells.

The examinations of the prisoners before the Rev. Robert Wright, were read to the court. The confession made by Munday shortly after the commission of the crime, charged Munday and the witness Parsons with the offence.

Mr. Jeremy, on the part of the prisoners, called Thos. Brindell, a private in the 12th regt. who was confined in Winchester gaol for exceeding his parole, in the same ward with Parsons, and had heard him say, "There is not a man in Sutton but I would accuse to get myself free, I know they will take my word first, because I am the youngest. I will nail up two next assizes."

Joseph Kelly, another private in the 12th, confined with Brindell, heard Parsons use similar expressions, which he had written down at the request of Daniel Rose, a prisoner in the same ward.

Mr. William Russ, of Wonston, gave Munday a good character during the three years he was in his employ.

The judge, addressing the jury, said that the charge, which was one of a very serious nature, rested almost solely on the evidence of the boy Parsons, whose testimony should be looked at with some degree of caution. Had he been an accomplice, no case would have

been made out against the prisoners. The boy had stated that he took no part; but was forced by the two prisoners. The learned judge, in recapitulating the evidence, observed that the depositions could not be received as evidence, and therefore the jury must dismiss them from their mind. If the Jury should consider the evidence of Parsons true, and sufficiently corroborated, they would find the prisoners guilty, but should any doubt exist, the prisoners should have the benefit of it.

The jury, after a short deliberation, returned a verdict of guilty.

Mr. Justice Patteson, before passing sentence on Tuesday morning, observed that the evidence against the prisoners did not strike him with the same sense of their guilt as it did the jury. During the trial he entertained strong doubts of their guilt. The conduct of the boy was such at least to cast a suspicion on his evidence. It was quite clear, from the evidence of Kelly and the other witness, that all the testimony which the boy gave in the box was not true; but it was for the jury, and not for his lordship, to decide on the effects of his evidence. After mature consideration they found them guilty, and it was his lordship's duty to pronounce the sentence of the law. Since the trial the jury intimated to his lordship a wish to recommend them to mercy. He had considered the case with much anxiety. It was very rarely indeed that a mitigation of sentence took place in convictions for arson. He had not completely made up his mind on the subject; he would still consider it, and without holding out any hopes to them, he would merely say, that if he could satisfy his own mind that, consistently with his duty he could recommend them to the mercy of the crown, he would do it; but as he had not made up his mind finally, he would pronounce upon them the sentence which the law directed. The learned judge then passed sentence of death upon the prisoners in the usual form.

THE following letter to Parson Malthus was written in Long Island *fifteen years ago*! My readers will see the necessity of republishing it at this very critical period.

TO
PARSON MALTHUS.

On the rights of the poor; and on the cruelty recommended by him to be exercised towards the poor.

North Hampstead, Long Island,
6. Feb. 1819.

PARSON,

I have, during my life, detested many men; but never any one so much as you. Your book on *POPULATION* contains matter more offensive to my feelings even than that of the *dungeon-bill*. It could have sprung from no mind not capable of dictating acts of greater cruelty than any recorded in the history of the massacre of St. Bartholomew. Priests have, in all ages, been remarkable for cool and deliberate and unrelenting cruelty; but it seems to have been reserved for the church of England to produce one who has a just claim to the atrocious pre-eminence. No assemblage of words can give an appropriate designation of you; and, therefore, as being the single word which best suits the character of such a man, I call you *parson*, which, amongst other meanings, includes that of *boroughmonger* too.

It must be very clear to every attentive reader of your book on *Population*, that it was written for the sole purpose of preparing beforehand a justification for those deeds of injustice and cruelty, of which the *Parish Vestry Bill* appears to be a mere prelude. The project will fail; the tyrants will not have the power to commit the deeds, which you recommend, and which they intend to commit. But, that is no matter. It is right that the scheme should be exposed; in order that, as we ought to take the will for the deed, we may be prepared to do justice to the schemer and to the intended executors of the scheme.

In your book you show, that, in cer-

tain cases, a *crowded* population has been attended with great evils, a great deal of unhappiness, misery, and human degradation. You then, without any reason to bear you out, predict, or leave it to be clearly inferred, that the same is likely to take place in England. Your principles are almost all false; and your reasoning, in almost every instance, is the same. But, it is not my intention to waste my time on your abstract matter. I shall come, at once, to your practical result; to your recommendation to the boroughmongers to pass laws to *punish the poor for marrying*.

I have in my possession a list of 743 parsons (of the church of England I mean) who have taken an active part in the Dungeon and Oliver proceedings, either as justices of the peace, or as suppressors, unlawfully, of my publications. They have threatened hawkers; they have imprisoned many; they have starved the families of not a few; they have threatened booksellers; they have, in many instances (not less than twenty that have come to my knowledge) caused "*Paper against Gold*," to be excluded from *reading-rooms*, though that is a work which ought to be read by every one, high as well as low, rich as well as poor. I much hate these execrable parsons; but, the whole mass put together is not, to me, an object of such perfect execration as you are. You are, in my opinion, a man (if we give you the name) not to be expostulated with: but to be punished. And, I beg the public to regard this paper of mine as intended merely to prove, that you deserve the severest punishment that outraged laws can inflict upon you.

The bare idea of a law to punish a labourer and artisan for *marrying*; the bare idea is enough to fill one with indignation and horror. But, when this is moulded into a distinct proposal and strong recommendation, we can hardly find patience sufficient to restrain us from breaking out into a volley of curses on the head of the proposer, be he who he may. What, then, can describe our feelings, when we find that this proposition does not come from an

eunuch; no, nor from a *hermit*; no, nor from a man who has condemned *himself* to a life of *celibacy*; but from a *priest* of a church, the origin of which was the incontinence of its clergy, who represented views of chastity as amongst the damnable errors of the church of Rome; and have, accordingly, fully indulged themselves in carnal enjoyments; what can describe our feelings, when we find that the proposition comes from a priest of this luxurious, this voluptuous, this sensual fraternity, who, with all their piety, were unable to devote their own vessels to the Lord!

But, before I proceed further, let us have your proposition before us in your own insolent words; first, observing that, at the time when you wrote your book, the boroughmongers began to be alarmed at the increase of the *poor-rates*: they boasted of wonderful *national prosperity*; wonderful ease and happiness; wonderful improvements in agriculture; but still the *poor-rates wonderfully increased*. Indeed they seem to increase with the *increase* of the boroughmongers' *national prosperity*, which might, I think, very fairly be called the eighth wonder of the world.

Being in this puzzle, the boroughmongers found in a priest the advocate of a method to rid them of their ground of alarm. You, overlooking all the real causes of the increase of the paupers, assumed, without any internal proof, and against all experience, that *the giving of relief* is the cause of the evil, and then you came to your proposition of a *remedy*. The words, the infamous words, are as follows:

"To this end I should propose a regulation to be made, declaring, that
 "no child born from any marriage taking place after the expiration of a year from the date of the law; and
 "no illegitimate child born two years from the same date, should ever be entitled to parish assistance. After the public notice, which I have proposed, had been given, to the punishment of nature HE should be left; the punishment of severe want; all parish assistance should be rigidly denied him. HE should be taught that

"the laws of nature had doomed him
 "and his *family* to starve; that HE
 "had no claim on society for the small-
 "est portion of food; that if HE and
 "his *family* were saved from suffering the
 "utmost extremities of hunger, he
 "would owe it to the pity of some kind
 "benefactor, to whom HE ought to be
 "bound by the strongest ties of grati-
 "tude."

I never yet knew a parson who understood *grammar*, so that I am little surprised at this HE, which, according to the words, means the *child* (though it may be a *girl*); but which HE does, I suppose, mean the *man*, who shall dare to marry or to have a bastard by some unmarried woman; and yet, in this latter case, what mean you by talking of the man's *family*? Cruel, impudent, and muddleheaded: a parson all through! I will, however, suppose you, by HE, to mean the *man*: and will, if I can, coolly remark upon this atrocious proposition.

You talk of the "*punishment of nature*"; you talk of "the laws of *nature*" "having doomed him and his family to "starve." Now in the first place, the laws of nature, the most imperative of all her laws, bid him *love* and seek the gratification of that passion in a way that leads to the procreation of his species. The laws of nature bid man as well as woman desire to produce and preserve children. Your prohibition is in the face of these imperative laws, for you punish the illegitimate as well as the legitimate offspring. I shall not talk to you about *religion*, for I shall suppose you, being a parson, care little about that. I will not remind you, that one of the articles of the church, to which articles you have *sworn*, reprobates the doctrine of celibacy, as being hostile to the word of God; that the same article declares that it is lawful for all Christian men to marry; that one of the church prayers beseeches God that the married pair may be fruitful in children; that another prayer calls little children as arrows in the hands of the giant, and says that the man is happy who has his quiver full of them; that the scriptures tell us that Lot's neighbours were con-

sumed by fire and brimstone, and that Onan was stricken dead, that adultery and fornication are held, in the New Testament, to be deadly sins: I will not dwell upon anything in this way, because you, being a parson, would laugh in my face. I will take you on your own ground; the *laws of nature*.

The laws of nature, written in our passions, desires, and propensities; written even in the organization of our bodies; these laws compel the two sexes to hold that sort of intercourse which produces children. Yes, say you, but nature has *other laws*; and amongst those are, that man shall live by *food*, and that, if he cannot obtain food, he shall *starve*. Agreed, and, if there be a man in England who cannot find, in the *whole country*, food enough to keep him alive, I allow that *nature has doomed him to starve*. If, in no shop, house, mill, barn, or other place, he can find food sufficient to keep him alive; then, I allow that the laws of nature condemn him to die.

"Oh!" you will, with parson-like bawl, exclaim, "but he must not commit *robbery* or *larceny*!" Robbery or larceny! what do you mean by that? Does the law of *nature* say anything about robbery or larceny? Does the law of nature know anything of these things? No: the law of nature bids man to take whenever he can find it, whatever is necessary to his life, health, and ease. So, you will quit the law of nature *now*, will you? You will only take it as far as serves your purpose of cruelty. You will take it to sanction your barbarity: but will fling it away when it offers the man food.

Your muddled parson's head has led you into confusion here. The *law of nature* bids a man *not starve* in a land of plenty, and forbids his being punished for taking food wherever he can find it. Your law of nature is sitting at Westminster to make the labourer pay taxes, to make him fight for the safety of the land, to bind him in allegiance, and when he is poor and hungry, to cast him off to starve, or, to hang him if he take food to save his life!

That is your law of nature ; that is a parson's law of nature. I am glad, however, that you blundered upon the law of nature ; because that is the very ground on which I meant to start in endeavouring clearly to establish the *rights of the poor* ; on which subject I have, indeed, lately offered some observations to the public, but on which subject I have not dwelt so fully as its importance seemed to demand ; especially at a time, when the poor ought to understand clearly what their rights are.

When nature (for God and religion are out of the question with parsons) ; when nature causes a country to exist and people to exist in it, she leaves the people, as she does other animals, to live as they can ; to follow their own inclinations and propensities ; to exert their skill and strength for their own advantage, or, rather, at their pleasure. She imposes no shackles other than those which the heart and mind themselves possess. She gives no man dominion over another man, except that dominion which grows out of superior cunning or bodily strength. She gives to no man any portion of the earth or of its fruits for his own exclusive enjoyments. And, if any man, in such a state of things, cannot get food sufficient to keep him alive, he must die ; and, it may truly enough, *there*, be said, that "the laws of nature have doomed him to be starved."

But, when this state of things is wholly changed ; when the people come to an agreement to desist *for their mutual benefit*, from using their cunning and strength at their sole will and pleasure. When the strong man agrees to give up the advantage which nature has given him, in order that he may enjoy the greater advantage of those regulations which *give protection to all*, he must surely be understood to suppose, as a condition, that no state of things is ever to arise, in which he, without having broken the compact on his part, is to be refused not only protection from harm, but even the bare means of existence. The land, the trees, the fruits, the herbage, the roots are, by the law of

nature, the common possession of all the people. The social compact, entered into for their mutual *benefit* and *protection* ; not Castlereagh's "*social system*," which means the employment of spies and blood-money men, and the existence of mutual suspicion and constant danger to life and limb. The social compact gives rise at once to the words *mine* and *thine*. Men exert their skill and strength upon particular spots of land. These become their *own*. And, when laws come to be made, these spots are called the property of the owners. But, still the property in land, especially, can never be so *complete* and *absolute* as to give to the proprietors the right of withholding the means of existence, or of animal enjoyment, from any portion of the people ; seeing that the very foundation of the compact was the *protection* and *benefit* of the whole. Men, in agreeing to give up their rights to a common enjoyment of the land and its fruits, never could mean to give up, in any contingency, their right to *live* and to *love*, and to seek the gratification of desires necessary to the perpetuating of their species. And, if a contingency arise, in which men, without the commission of any crime on their part, are unable by moderate labour that they do perform, or are willing to perform, or by contributions from those who have food, to obtain food sufficient for themselves and their women and children, there is no longer *benefit* and *protection* to the whole ; the social compact is at an end ; and men have a right, thenceforward, to act agreeably to the laws of nature. If, in process of time, the land get into the hands of a comparatively small part of the people, and if the proprietors were to prevent, by making parks, or in any other way, a great part of the land from being cultivated, would they have a right to say to the rest of the people, You shall *breed no more* ; if you do, *nature* has doomed you to starvation ? Would they have a right to say, "We leave you the *punishment of nature*" ? If they were fools enough to do this, the rest of the people would, doubtless, snap them at their word, and say, "Very well, then,

"*nature* bids us live and love and have children, and get food for them from the land: here is a pretty park, I'll have a bit here; you take a bit there, Jack"; and so on. What! say the proprietors, would you take our *property*? No: but if you will neither give us some of the fruits without our labour, nor give us some of them for our labour, we will use some of the land, for starved we will not be. "Why do you love and have children then?" Because nature impels us to it; and because our right to gratify the passion of love was never given up either expressly or tacitly.

But there are the *helpless*, there are those who are *infirm*; there are babies, and aged and insane persons. Are the proprietors to support them? To be sure they are; else what *benefit*, what *protection*, do these receive from the social compact? If these are to be refused protection, why is the feeble and infirm rich man to be protected in his property, or in any other way? Before the social compact existed there were no sufferers from *helplessness*.

The possession of every thing being in common, every man was able, by extraordinary exertion, to provide for his helpless kindred and friends, by the means of those exertions. He used more than ordinary industry; he dug and sowed more than ordinary; all the means which nature gave were at his command according to his skill and strength. And, when he agreed to allow of proprietorship, he understood, of course, that the helpless were, in case of need, to be protected and fed by the proprietors. Hence the *poor*, by which we ought always to mean the *helpless* only, have a right founded in the law of nature, and necessarily recognised by the compact of every society of men. Take away this right; deny its existence; and then see to what a state you reduce the feeble, shadow of a man, who calls himself a landowner. The constables and all the whole *posse* of the county are to be called forth to protect him. The able and hearty labourer is to be *compelled* to fight for this frail creature; but if the father of this la-

bourer become helpless, this father is to be handed over to the *punishment of nature*; though nature would enable the son to provide most amply for the father, if there were not laws to restrain the son from using for the supply of the father that same strength which he is compelled to use in the defence of the feeble proprietor! Oh, no! Mr. Parson! If we are to be left to the *punishment of nature*, leave us also to be rewarded by nature. Leave us to the honest dame all through the piece: she is very impartial in rewards as well as in her punishments: let us have the latter, and we will take the former with all our hearts.

Their boroughmongerships were extremely angry with the SPENCEANS for their talking about a common partnership in the land; but the Spenceans have as much right as you to propose to return to a state of nature; yet you have not yet been *dungeoned*.

By this time the Hampshire parsons, who are at the bottom of all projects brought forward by STURGES BOURNE, who is the chairman of their quarter sessions, may, though they are as stupid as they are malignant, begin to perceive, that you might as well have left the *law of nature* alone. Let us next see how the case stands according to the *law of the land*, which I fancy you and Sturges and his able crew will find, awards some *rights to the poor*.

To suppose such a thing possible as a society, in which men who are able and willing to work cannot support their families, and ought, with a great part of the women, to be *compelled* to lead a life of celibacy, for fear of having children to be starved; to suppose such a thing possible is monstrous. But if there should be such a society, every one will say, that it ought instantly to be dissolved; because a state of nature would be far preferable to it. However, the *laws of England* say, that no person shall be without a sufficiency of food and raiment; and, as we shall see, this part of our laws is no more than a recognition of those principles of the social compact of which I have just been speaking.

The lands of England, like those of any other country, were at one time, and before society was formed, the common property of all the people in England; *proprietorship* in individuals arose as I have above stated; till, at last, all the land was appropriated. But, so far (when society came to be formed completely) was the proprietorship of individuals regarded as *absolute*, that it was made a thing wholly dependent on the sovereign power of the nation. The sovereign power (which with us, is in a king as chief of the nation) was regarded as *the proprietor of all the land*; as the *lord* of it all. And, at this very hour, there is not an inch of land in the kingdom, to which any man has any *title*, which title does not acknowledge that the land is *held under the King*. There are lands held under lords of manors; but, then these lords of manors hold their manors under *the King*. So that, as the King has no Divine right to rule, but rules and holds his office for the good of the people, and as he may, in case of violation of the laws, be set aside, and see another put in his place, he, as Lord Paramount of the land, is only the chief of the nation: and, of course, all the lands are *held under the nation*.

Agreeably to this notion we daily see the lands of men taken away for public uses sorely against their will. We know that armies may be encamped on them, without liability to actions of trespass. We know that men are *paid*, indeed, for their lands taken away; but, they are *compelled* to give up the lands. Nay, their lands may be *ceded to foreign nations*. All which, and many other things that might be mentioned, prove, that the nation never gives up its paramount right to the lands.

Now, Parson Malthus, were there not some *conditions*, on which the lands of England were granted to, or made the property of, individual persons or families? Every one, who knows any thing at all of the laws of England, knows, that to every grant of land was attached the performance of some *service, or duty*, towards the sovereign, or chief of the nation. Sometimes the service was of

a military nature: sometimes of an agricultural nature; sometimes of a pecuniary nature. Nay, the hold which the sovereign still kept of the lands was so strong, that he was regarded, and he acted too, as guardian of all heirs and heiresses; and, in default of regular heirs, took back the lands, no one being able to give his lands by *will*.

Thus, the king, or sovereign, held an estate in the lands. From this estate the sovereign drew his means of carrying on the government, of making war, alliances, and so forth. These services have, for the greater part, been abolished by acts of Parliament; and taxes have been raised to supply their place.

As to the poor, when the lands were at first granted to individuals, those individuals were the heads of *bands* or little *knots* of men. The leader, in time, called himself the *lord*, and those under him his *vassals*, or *villeins*, or, under tenants, and almost slaves. The lords had the services of the vassals and villeins, and the vassals and villeins were protected and taken care of by the lords. So that, in this, the worst state of things (always excepting the *present*) the *poor* must, of course, have had a provision, they being in some sort the property of the lords.

When Christianity came to make considerable progress in England, and the lords of the land became Christians, they caused churches and parsonage-houses to be erected; they were allowed to give lands to, and to settle tithes on, the priest. And now mark me, parson, for we are now coming to the point at which you will be pinched. These priests, you will observe, were to have no *wives*, and, of course, no *children* to keep. Therefore, it would have been preposterous to give them the tenth part of the produce of the lands, seeing that besides, they disclaimed all worldly possessions. *What should they do with this tenth part of the fruits of the earth?* The fact is, that the endowment was made upon the condition, that the priest should expend a fourth in his own way; a fourth was to go to the bishop of the diocese; a fourth was to

maintain the edifice of the church; and a fourth was to *maintain the poor*. For a long while there was no *general law* for the yielding of tithes; but, when that charge was legally imposed on all the lands, the poor were, of course, everywhere entitled to this fourth part. *Villeinage* being at this time greatly diminished, it was proper to provide a resource for the helpless other than that of the tables of the lords, and, therefore, this species of hospitality was transferred to the church, from which the poor had a *right* to demand a maintenance, and from which they received it, too, until the *robbery of the poor* (which has been called a *robbery of the church*) took place in the reign of King Henry the Eighth.

Before that time, the poor were, according to the *common law*, that is, the settled law of the whole kingdom, to be *sustained by those who received the tithes*, in the several parishes or districts, which, indeed, all became parishes, except some particular spots, now called extra-parochial. That this was the *law of the land*, at and before the grand robbery of the poor in the time of Henry the wife-killer, and defender of the faith, is certain, not only from the *law-books*, but from the *statute-book*.

This is so important a matter, that, though I have, on a very late occasion, gone pretty fully into it, I will not be deterred, by the fear of a charge of repetition, from doing the same again.

When the regular clergy, or monks, or more properly speaking, the persons, of whatever order, who lived in religious houses, or monasteries, came to be in high repute for their piety and for the efficacy of their prayers, in behalf of the souls of rich persons, they very soon persuaded those persons to give them a part, at least, of their property; and, some of these rich persons gave *advowsons* to the monasteries.

When churches were founded and endowed, the founder and endower became the *patron*, or *protector*, of it; and he had the right to *present* to the bishop the *priest* who was to officiate in the church and receive its revenues. This right of presenting is called an *ad-*

advowson, and we know that *advowsons* are now become objects of *traffic*, and have been frequently *gambled for*.

Rich persons frequently gave to the monasteries *advowsons* as well as other things; and then the monasteries sent a priest of their own to act as a parish priest, who was allowed a small part for himself; but who was obliged to send away the far greater part of his revenues to the monastery. So that, out of this arose great distress to the poor, who thus lost *their share* of the tithes. This gave rise to two acts of Parliament, one passed in the fifteenth year of the reign of Richard the Second, and one in the fourth year of Henry the Fourth, ordering, that, in all such cases, a sufficiency of the revenues of the church should be retained in the parish for the sustenance of the poor.

Thus, then, clear as day-light, stood the legal *rights* of the poor, previous to the grand robbery of them in the reign of Henry the Eighth; when, and in a few years afterwards, they were despoiled of the whole of their reserved resources. The tithes were either *given to courtiers*, or to *priests with wives*, and thus they have continued to this day.

But, still there would be poor and helpless persons; and as there was no such man as you at hand to recommend the "*punishment of nature*," provision was made for the poor in the way of *rate*, or *tax*. Hence arose the present system of poor-laws; which, for those unable to work, provide food and raiment; and, for those able to work, employment whereby they may obtain food and raiment. And BLACKSTONE, in his enumeration of the *rights of persons*, has this right to be sustained in case of need. "The law," says he, "not only regards *life and member*, and protects every man in the *enjoyment* of them, but also furnishes him with every thing *necessary for their support*. For there is no man so indigent or wretched, but he may demand a supply sufficient for all the necessities of life from the more opulent part of the community, by means of the several statutes enacted for the relief of the poor; a humane provision, and dic-

"tated by the principles of society." Surely it was dictated by those principles; but the necessity of making it arose out of the *robbery of the poor* by Henry the Eighth's courtiers, and by priests of the succeeding reigns; which priests have, from that day to this, chosen to have wives and families. According to the law of the land, it is not *larceny* nor *robbery* where a person (not owing to his fault) is *reduced to extreme necessity, and steals victuals merely to satisfy present hunger, and to prevent starving*; and I have no hesitation in saying, that a jury who convicts a person under such circumstances are guilty of *perjury*. The law is just here; for, if there be a state of society which exposes persons to starvation, without any fault on their own part, such society is a monster in legislation; it is worse than a state of nature, and ought to be dissolved. What! a social compact, formed for the purpose of punishing persons (who have been guilty of no fault) for using the only means left within their power to preserve their lives! A social compact which does not recognise their right to live: oh no, you do not deny any body a right to live; you only wish for a law to make them *live on grass or dirt*, if they marry after a certain day, or are the fruit of any marriage or of any cohabiting or carnal communication after that certain day! That is *all* you want. *Only* that! Those who are alive now, whether married or single, may have a right to *live*; but all that marry, or that shall proceed from any marriage or any unlawful commerce, *after this time*, are to feed with the crows or the rabbits! So that, at the end of about forty or fifty, or, at most, eighty years, there shall be no person entitled to relief; and that, in a few years, the number of persons so entitled shall be very small.

Callous parson, hardened parson, I have proved, that the relief now given, and that ought to be more largely given by the statute law, to the poor, is their right; that it came to supply the place of that relief which the law of the land gave them before the thing called the reformation; and that the law of the

land only supplied in this respect the place of the law of nature. I have traced the rights of the poor, meaning the helpless either from inability to labour or from inability to find labour. I have traced their rights down from the origin of the social compact to the present day, and have shown, that men, when they originally gave up their right of possessing the land in common, now gave up, either for themselves, or for future generations, the right of living, loving, and perpetuating their like.

But, muddy-headed parson, while you deny the labouring classes these rights, will you choose to consider them as having no claim *on society* for "the *smallest portion* of food, oh! impudent parson! *your wife and children have, I suppose!* But, to be cool if possible. While you consider the labouring classes as having no claim *upon society* even for the smallest portion of food; you do not say a word about the claims, the *many and great claims*, which society *has upon them!* If a young man, a labourer, just one-and-twenty, were to hear your proposition; if he were to hear you say, that, if he married, he should be left to the laws of nature, and should have no claim on society, even for the smallest portion of food, one may suppose that the *answer* which he would give you, would be in somewhat the following words:

"Mr. Parson Malthus,—I have no objection to your proposition; for, though I and my brother and our two sisters have a father and mother, who, owing to the taxes have never been able to save any thing for old age, and though we may have large families of children, yet I am not at all afraid, that in consequence of this new regulation, we shall be able to do very well for the future, as we have not any claim upon society, when we are infirm or helpless, for even the smallest portion of food, it will certainly not be pretended, even by the Hampshire parsons, with he of Botley at their head, that society has any claim upon us. We have been *born* here in England to be sure, but, as society was not to blame for

"our not remaining in our progenitors'
 "loins, so we are not to blame for com-
 "ing into the world. Here we are,
 "however; and, as we now find, that
 "we have no right to protection from
 "society, we will set to work and do
 "the best we can for ourselves. The
 "society has shaken us off, and we will
 "shake it off. You send us to the
 "law of nature for food in our distress,
 "and we will avail ourselves of that
 "law for our benefit. As to any other
 "laws we know nothing of them.

(To be continued.)

From the LONDON GAZETTE,

FRIDAY, AUGUST 1, 1834.

INSOLVENT.

ELMORE, R., Bankside, Southwark, coal-
 merchant.

BANKRUPTS.

ALLEN, J. N., Lamb's Conduit-street, Red-
 lion-square, tailor.

BLENCOE, J., Knightsbridge, tailor.

COCKING, T., Great Portland-street, Mary-
 bonne, chemist.

SHOWELL, T., Bath-street, City-road, tailor.

VAUGHAN, W., Covington-terrace, Ber-
 modsey, dealer.

VOGEL, A. L., Finsbury-circus, merchant.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 5.

BANKRUPTCIES ANNULLED.

ALLSOP, J., Belper, Derbyshire, wheel-
 wright.

COWAN, W., Newcastle-upon-Tyne, draper.

KEY, W., Isleworth, linen-draper.

BANKRUPTS.

BAKER, W., Southampton, linen-draper.

CROME, J. B., Norwich, drawing-master.

DUTTON, J. T., Harrington, Cumberland,
 manufacturing-chemist.

IRONMONGER, E., Barton-under-Need-
 wood, Staffordshire, builder.

JUDD, W. H., Bath, draper.

MAWMAN, J., Arbour-square, Commercial-
 road-east, shipowner.

MILLS, W., Lavenham, Suffolk, innkeeper.

WARD, S., Leeds, hackney-coach-proprietor.

LONDON MARKETS.

MARK-LANE, CORN-EXCHANGE, Aug. 4.—

The supplies from the home counties to this morning's market have been moderate, particularly from Kent. We have had several samples of new Wheat exhibiting, as well from the latter county as Essex. Although some of the parcels were of middling quality, yet the principal portion was fine, and in good condition, having been harvested previous to the rains, and therefore forms no criterion of the probable character of the general runs we are likely to receive from these counties. The weather having proved fine since Friday, the trade opened heavily at the improvement noted on that day of 4s. to 5s. per quarter, and though those rates were realized, yet lower terms were, in many instances, submitted to, and the market closed dull at an advance of about 4s. from the quotations of this day se'nnight. Bonded Wheat also relapsed, and attracted a limited attention.

Barley comes to hand very sparingly, and the samples offering found purchasers for grinding purposes at fully the previous currency.

Malt was in very limited request, but prices nominally the same.

The Oat trade remained steady at Friday's improvement of 1s. per quarter with a fair retail demand. The uncertainty however of the quantity of foreign Oats likely to be entered for the home consumption at the present duty of 10s. 9d., checks for the present any extensive operations. Bonded Oats are full 1s. 6d. per quarter dearer than this day week, sales having been effected at 11s. to 12s., as noted in the review of the trade of the past week.

Beans were firm, and in some instances obtained 1s. more than on Monday.

New White Peas maintained their quotations of 48s. to 50s. and hog qualities were rather dearer.

An attempt was made by the town millers to advance Flour 5s. per sack, but the depression of to-day, checking the animation of Friday's market, prevented their carrying their efforts into execution. Fresh ship Flour must be noted 2s. per sack dearer than this day se'nnight, and the top price of Irish qualities 39s. per sack.

Wheat, Essex, Kent, and Suffolk	48s. to 52s.
— White	52s. to 60s.
— Norfolk, Lincolnshire, } and Yorkshire.....	44s. to 51s.
— White, ditto	45s. to 56s.
— West Country red.....	42s. to 51s.
— White, ditto	47s. to 56s.
— Northumberland and } Berwickshire red..	42s. to 48s.
— White, ditto	44s. to 51s.
— Moray, Angus, and } Rothshire red.....	40s. to 46s.
— White, ditto	44s. to 48s.
— Irish red	40s. to 44s.
— White, ditto	40s. to 45s.

Barley, Malting	29s. to 31s.
— Chevalier	29s. to 31s.
— Distilling	30s. to 31s.
— Grinding	27s. to 29s.
Malt, new	47s. to —s.
— Norfolk, pale	50s. to 58s.
— Ware	56s. to 62s.
Peas, Hog and Gray	36s. to 40s.
— Maple	40s. to 42s.
— White Boilers	45s. to 49s.
Beans, Small	32s. to 37s.
— Harrow	32s. to 37s.
— Tick	32s. to 35s.
Oats, English Feed	21s. to 22s.
— Short, small	22s. to 24s.
— Poland	22s. to 24s.
— Scotch, common	22s. to 24s.
— — Potato	25s. to 26s.
— — Berwick	24s. to 25s.
— Irish, Galway, &c.	22s. to 23s.
— — Potato	22s. to 24s.
— — Black	21s. to 23s.
Bran, per 16 bushels	11s. to 12s.
Flour, per sack	43s. to 46s.

PROVISIONS.

Butter, Dorset	40s. to —s. per cwt.
— Cambridge	40s. to —s.
— York	38s. to —s.
Cheese, Dble. Gloucester	48s. to 68s.
— Single ditto....	44s. to 48s.
— Cheshire	54s. to 74s.
— Derby	50s. to 60s.
Hams, Westmoreland..	50s. to 60s.
— Cumberland ...	46s. to 56s.

SMITHFIELD, August 4.

This day's supply of Beasts was sufficiently numerous, but in great part of very indifferent quality; the supply of Sheep, Lambs, Calves, and, for the time of the year, Porkers good. Trade was, with prime Beef, Mutton, and Lamb, somewhat brisk, at an advance of full 2d. per stone; with the middling and inferior kinds, as also with Pork, dull, at Friday's quotations, and with Veal at a depression of from 4d. to 6d. per stone.

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3 per Cent. } Fri. Sat. Mon. Tues. Wed. Thur.	
Cons. Ann. }	90 $\frac{3}{4}$ 90 $\frac{3}{4}$ 90 $\frac{3}{4}$ 91 $\frac{1}{8}$ 91 $\frac{1}{8}$ 90 $\frac{3}{4}$

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